

# TEAM NEPAL

JOHNSTONE HIGH SCHOOL - WORLD CHALLENGE EXPEDITION - NEPAL 2013

## The Trip is Over - and What a Rush

Team Nepal were the Johnstone High pioneers when it comes to World Challenge expeditions. And what a memorable and magnificent trip it proved to be for all concerned. Team Nepal proved to be a

real credit to themselves, their families and their school. They will be a very hard act to follow for any future World Challenge expeditions. However,

after the success of this trip, all concerned agree that a World Challenge experience is an absolutely not to be missed opportunity when the chance arises.



## We Are All Team Nepal

Bringing together 15 people in close proximity for over 3 weeks is usually a recipe for tears, tantrums - and turning points.

The trip saw some brief tears and little in the way of tantrums. When tempers were beginning to fray mid-trip, a team meeting was arranged, views were exchanged in a mature manner and peace was restored.

My abiding memories of Team Nepal will be the laughs that were shared by everyone, every

day, and the real sense of camaraderie between the whole group.

The team worked together so well, looked out for each other when times were tough and made sure that the laughs kept on coming.

Team Nepal - Never Ending Peace And Love? The signs look good.

**by J. McGivern**

School Leader



**NAGAJUNA BOARDING SCHOOL** A real highlight of the trip was the time spent in Nagajuna. Several rooms painted, a marvellous mural composed and Nepal vs Scotland football matches. And those pupils - special times.



**WHITE WATER RAFTING** Thrills and spills on the Trishuli river. Once Shaun was thrown overboard, everyone relaxed and had a great time riding the rapids. Tough work at times.



**POON HILL TREK** The lesson for future world challenge teams - be fit! The trek was very, very tough for some of the team with the heat, the climbing and the weight of the bags. All smiles at the end though.

# My Month in Nepal



by **Lauren Johnston**  
*Challenger*

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**ON MONDAY THE 24TH OF JUNE, I EMBARKED ON A LIFE CHANGING EXPEDITION TO NEPAL ALONG WITH 11 OTHER STUDENTS, 2 TEACHERS AND AN EXPEDITION LEADER.**

We met at Johnstone High with our rucksacks for a team talk before heading to Glasgow airport. The parents were waiting to say their last goodbyes before we began our journey. There was excitement and angst as we boarded our first of many flights - to London. At Heathrow we caught the express train to terminal 5 and collected the money budgeted for the trip from World Challenge. We sprinted to the gate as we heard the last boarding call over the tannoy. Flustered and with moments to spare, we took our seats on our Etihad flight to Abu Dhabi. We were welcomed in Arabic, the first culture shock, and the plane lights dimmed for take off. The flight left at 9pm British time and landed at 7am Abu Dhabi time. The airport was hectic and there were few English speaking staff. The culture in Abu Dhabi was far removed from back home, something we would expect about Nepal. After a long layover, we boarded our last flight to Kathmandu! Spirits were high as we knew that 2 years of preparation and dreaming was soon to become real.

After a bumpy landing, we were finally in Kathmandu! Despite losing a tent on route from Heathrow to Kathmandu, everyone was ecstatic to begin a month long adventure. As we walked out the airport, there was carnage. Mobs of Nepali people approached our group, begging for tips and tried to coax us into taxis. It was hectic and intimidating. We were rushed into a minibus and our rucksacks were thrown on to the roof, held down by just a piece of rope. Driving to our hotel gave us our first insight into Kathmandu. The

streets were cluttered and chaotic. At our hotel we had dinner- Momos. They were a Tibetan dumpling, which were extremely popular in Nepal and delicious! After two days of traveling, everyone was tired and a proper sleep was in desperate need!

On Wednesday, our first morning in Kathmandu, we had breakfast in a garden café and were greeted by the Sherpas who would be assisting us on trek. Amrit and Ganesh talked us through the route and the logistics of our week long hike. The remainder of the first day consisted of exploring and organising transport to Pokhara. Twelve roles had been created for the trip which would be rotated among the twelve students each day. I had the permanent role of accountant and therefore was in charge of the money for the entire trip.

We travelled from Kathmandu to Pokhara via a tourist bus on Thursday. The road out of Kathmandu followed a cliff edge and then the Trishuli river. We saw many villages on our 6 hour bus journey. The atmosphere in Pokhara was much more relaxed than that of Kathmandu. We had team games in the garden of our hotel before having dinner at a restaurant named Moondance. We spent the following day exploring Pokhara and walking around Lake Phewa.

Our first morning of trek was stressful. Everything had to be packed onto a minibus early morning before we set off out of Pokhara and into the depths of the forest. The week long trek phase was tiring. Mornings began at 6am to allow time for tents to be packed away and for everyone to eat breakfast, which was cooked by our accompanying sherpas. We would set off at 8am and hike for around 4 hours and then a 45 minute lunch. This break allowed time for our muscles to relax from constant uphill climbing. After lunch

was a further 3 hours uphill. By the time we reached camp, everyone was exhausted but we had the challenge of putting up our tents again. Trek was not only the most physically challenging aspect of this expedition but also mentally challenging. Our bodies had to adjust to varying altitudes as we climbed to 3210 metres, we had to deal with torrential monsoon rain whilst walking, exhaustion and leaches- it was common to take your boot off after a day's hike to find your socks soaked in blood and excess bites up your legs. On day 5 we summited Poonhill. We stayed in a Teahouse in Ghorepani overnight then hiked the final 350 metres early morning to the summit. Poonhill is one of the worlds, and Nepal's, most spectacular viewpoints and we certainly had that feeling once we arrived. Although it was cloudy breaks in the clouds allowed us to see Dhaulagiri, the 7th highest peak in the world at a staggering 8,167 metres. There were feelings of elation and joy as we reached Poonhill. The past few days of work had paid off. The following two days involved our descent from Poonhill to Pokhara which was far less physically demanding than the uphill trek!

The project phase was next. We contacted Yeshe, the school founder at the orphanage, and arranged for him to pick us up from Pokhara to the school as it was on the hills above the city. We were greeted by a group of older children who helped us carry our bags the mile long track to the school. Waiting for us in the building were the group of 110 kids with big grins, jumping around and chasing after us. We were greeted with a lunch of Tibetan bread and potatoes. The staff that worked at the orphanage- Yeshe, the chef and his assistant as well as one of the teachers - all welcomed us with open arms. The first day at the orphanage allowed us to bond with the children

and provide them with the attention they crave. We brought over skipping ropes and footballs to allow us to play with the children, especially the younger ones who we experienced the language barrier with. That afternoon, me and a few other people sat down with Yeshi and agreed on the colours we were going to paint the classrooms. It was exciting knowing we would transform the dirty concrete walls into bursts of colour that would hopefully brighten up their learning experience. We decided on bright yellow and turquoise and to paint a large map of the world in one of the rooms. We were all eager to start so two others and I accompanied Yeshi to buy paint with the money we had raised before the trip while the others started the drawing of the mural. On our first evening we were cooked a traditional Nepalese dish called Dal Bhat which we had all grown to love. After dinner, we reflected on our first day at the orphanage. Most of us felt rather emotional as the stories from the children had us thinking about our own lives back home and the huge contrast in the lives of these children.

Every morning we would wake up early to join in with the children's exercises before prayer at 7 o'clock. It was a humbling experience to watch the children praying before their breakfast, and we were grateful to have the opportunity to watch them. We were able to play with the children before classes began, which gave us more time to bond with them. There were 5 classes, which varied from the ages of 5-12. In groups, we had 2 hours with a class each day. During this time we taught the children about Scotland and they taught us about their country-national bird the Danphe, national flower the Rhododendron and their flag. We also taught the children some of our national songs including "Flower of Scotland". The children loved learning Scottish songs as music is a large part of their culture. My favourite time with the children

involved teaching them ceilidh dancing. We showed them the Gay Gordons and the Canadian barn dance. The children loved the dancing, especially the younger ones who were always eager to jump around. The afternoons were spent painting the classrooms whilst the children studied. The map of the world we painted attracted the attention of all the children and staff over the week. It took around 5 hours each day to complete the classrooms but once we had finished we had a feeling of pride. On our last evening the school held a thank you party for us. We watched some traditional Nepalese dancing and this gave us the chance to hand over the teddies we brought over as well as the £1100 we had raised for them. The chef made us Momos whilst we watched a documentary on the lives of Tibetan refugees. It was a very emotional night. The documentary highlighted the suffering of many Tibetans forced out of their homes. All of us were left shocked and overwhelmed with sadness. However, we wanted to end the night on a cheerful note so we followed the dinner with a ceilidh. This was the perfect opportunity for the children to show off the dances they had learned so well. We were heartbroken to be leaving but we all had a great time with the children who were so enthusiastic in everything we did. I felt that both the children and the staff really valued our presence here. I have learnt a lot about myself and other people, built great relations and found how enjoyable and satisfying it can be to work as a team for the sake of the children. This is a great opportunity to give something back (mostly time and attention) to children who have very little.

Our adventure was almost coming to an end. From Pokhara we travelled further south to Chitwan which was completely flat and lush, and significant hotter. We started our first day with a canoe ride down the Narayani River where we saw crocodiles, rhinos and kingfishers

along the banks. After the canoe ride, we had the chance to wash elephants at the water's edge. We climbed on the back of the elephant which then walked into the water and sprayed us with their trunks. During the afternoon we went on an elephant safari. Four of us sat in a "Howdah" - a wooden platform on the elephant's back. The elephant is driven through the jungle of the National Park by a "Mahout", allowing us to be closer to the Rhinos, deer and monkeys. Our time in Chitwan showed us the vast wildlife and landscape of Nepal.

The final few days of our trip were spent in Kathmandu, the capital city where we had first experienced the magic of Nepal. We were able to explore the city and must see tourist attractions. We visited the Pashupatinath Temple, the oldest and one of the most significant Hindu temples in the world. We also went to Boudhanath which has the largest Stupas in the city. Our last tourist site was the Swayambhunath, also known as the Monkey Temple as there are holy monkeys living in the grounds. On our final day we walked to Durbar Square which consists of a collection of temples and courtyards. This is also where you can visit the Royal Kumari. She is believed to be the incarnation of a goddess who is worshipped by Hindus and Nepali Buddhists.

That evening we made our way to Kathmandu airport to start our travels home to Glasgow. Our world challenge experience was certainly challenging, but also an incredible journey. The expedition was also an amazing journey of self-discovery. I learned valuable skills such as leadership, teamwork, self-motivation, communication and confidence which are important for later life. The month I spent in Nepal was a magnificent venture with a wonderful group of people who I now have a special bond with. This trip was truly an unforgettable experience.

## ABOUT ME



**Name:** Katie Dominy

**Age on Expedition:** 17

**Nepal Highlight:** Being at Nagajuna school, visiting the Monkey Temple and eating the tandoori chicken in Third Eye restaurant in Kathmandu!

**Nepal Lowlight:** Being ill for the first few days of the trek.

**Was it Worth the Hard Work**

**Fundraising:** Yes it was - thank goodness!

**Would you do it all again?** Yes I would! I'm planning on going back to Nepal in the spring.

**What advice would you give someone signing up for world challenge:** Just sign up for it! many of us were a bit unsure but decided to take the risk and we're so glad we did it. If you think you've got the determination to raise the funds, just do it!



Ocean too dark? Yeshi gives Katie some helpful advice.

# Nagajuna Modern Boarding School



by **Katie Dominy**

Challenger

ON A HOT, NEPALI MORNING, WE ARRIVED WITH SLEEPY EYES, BLISTERED FEET AND SORE LIMBS (FRESH FROM OUR TREK) AT NAGAJUNA MODERN BOARDING SCHOOL

As we got off the bus, we caught our first glimpse of the school, tucked beneath a giant hill far along a winding path, surrounded all around by paddy fields. 'Is this the place?' was the thought that passed through many of our minds, as the building looked fairly run down, and didn't look like it could house 120 children. Yet more doubt crept in when we made the walk from the main road along the path, where we had to long-jump over streams and trek through mud - several flip flops were harmed along the way!

As we got closer, we began to see many small heads peeking over classroom window sills, and eventually heard dozens of excited voices, all telling their classmates that the visitors had arrived. We were quickly ushered into an office to meet the school's founder and to be given our induction.

At that stage we didn't realise how full-on and exhausting the next five days were going to be; waking up at 6:30, playground games with the children at 8:00, two hours of teaching at 9:00, several hours of project work in the afternoon, yet more games with the pupils, then cooking... I'm sure many of the other challengers will agree that it was the most tiring but wonderful stage of the whole expedition.

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## NUMBERS

Total amount of members in Team Nepal

15

Number of leech bites suffered by team

40

Mars bars consumed by Mark Smith on expedition

62

by **Katie Dominy**

Challenger



It was incredibly daunting to be placed in classrooms with no warning, no lessons planned, no teacher supervision and no indication of the children's level of English, only an hour or so after arriving. The Nepali children staring at you expectantly, waiting patiently for you to say something did not lessen our unease. As we had been separated into different classes, some of us taught songs (some more successfully than others - Class 3's rendition of the Loch Lomond song was rather dodgy), the older classes practiced their English, and the younger classes showed off their dancing and singing. One thing became blatantly clear - lesson planning was essential! From that point on, thought and care went into planning activities and games, the main priority being that the children would enjoy the lessons. Paper and colouring pencils were bought so we could teach art, and Ewan (being an Active Schools Co-ordinator) had brought an array of sports equipment with him, the most popular being the skipping ropes, which provided the children with hours of fun. It was so humbling to see these children enjoying themselves whilst taking part in the simplest of activities. Their faces lit up when we presented them with a simple frisbee. How many Western children would react this way? It was demonstrated on countless occasions just how much these children truly appreciate the small things in life, the things that we would selfishly take for granted at home. We realised that sometimes the things that make a difference to a person's life are the things that do not cost a lot of money. The children's ability to see the good in the smallest of gestures is what makes them so extraordinary.

We wanted to leave our mark on Nagajuna, to show our appreciation and admiration of the children and

## NAGAJUNA SCHOOL



*Some classes created Coat of Arms drawings - one for Glasgow with the tree, the bird, the fish and the bell. Then they created one for Nagajuna where they decided the items that mattered most or were significant to them - school, family, mountains and uniform occurred frequently.*



\* Nagajuna pupils are mainly orphaned or underprivileged children who are selected by Yeshi (the school founder) on his annual trip. Yeshi walks to Manang from Pokhara which takes many days and repeats the journey back. Life would be very tough without Yeshi and Nagajuna for these children.

staff. We had already agreed to paint the classroom walls, but some of us also discussed the prospect of painting a mural with the school's founder, Yeshi. He agreed, and on Day 2 work began on the world map mural in the school's largest classroom. In addition, picture frames were painted on the walls, so that a child's good work could be recognised and put up on the wall for the rest of the class to see. Several of us worked for many hours over the remaining four days to complete the mural and the picture frames. At times things were slightly fraught, especially when Yeshi gave us his creative input, telling us the Pacific Ocean we had painted was 'too dark'! However, we soldiered on and the mural and picture frames were finally completed on the last day of our stay. The other classrooms had also been transformed from dirty, grey colours to bright blue and yellow, which gave the whole building a new, happy feel. We were very proud of what we had achieved, as it was all down to our effort, determination and hard work. Eilish must get special recognition, as she was responsible for drawing out the map onto the wall and for ensuring it

was completed to a high standard - she even got up at 5:30 on the last morning to paint so that it would be finished on time!

To our surprise, many of us found it very emotional leaving Nagajuna. All of the children there have come from underprivileged backgrounds, and some are even orphans. Without the work of Yeshi and the school, they would not be receiving an education, and they would be trapped in a life of poverty, struggling to make ends meet for the rest of their lives. Nagajuna School has provided their young lives with hope and a future, and even at their young age they understand and appreciate what a gift this is. Seeing 120 children standing outside the school and waving us off is a sight I will never forget. In fact, Mr McGivern was so inspired by what we saw that he wants us to do a sponsored sky-dive for the school, but only time will tell if we opt for something a bit more tame! However, I can guarantee that Nepal fundraising is not going to stop anytime soon. Sorry, but you'll have to keep buying those cakes for a bit longer...

# Perspiration, Pooches and Poon Hill



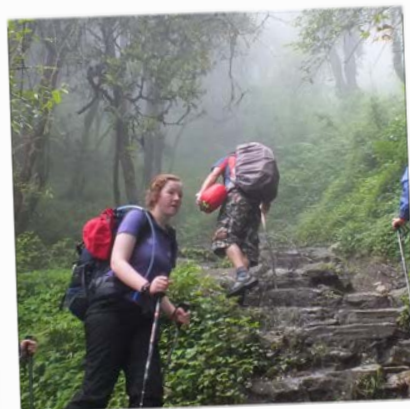
by **Ashley Campbell**

Challenger

## POON HILL TREK

The six day trek which we tackled while we were in Nepal was far from an easy task. We had our ups and downs emotionally as well as geographically. Throughout our trek we endured the challenging climbs up steep and long stone staircases as well as meeting leeches along the way and they definitely liked some of us more than others. As a team we stuck together through the tough parts and had lots of laughs along the way. The trek would have been a bigger challenge if it wasn't for the fantastic Summit Nepal Trekking team who did a fantastic job of feeding us, being our trek guides and also our porters, They weren't just summit Nepal Trekking - they had become our friends. Better not forget to mention our team dog Simba

whom we 'adopted'. This little guy followed us from day one and even summited Poon Hill with us, although he gave us a fright a few times when he got himself into fights. When we had summited Poon Hill and we were sitting as a team drinking our hot chocolate the feeling of achievement I had, and I'm sure the rest of the team had, was indescribable. Overall, as Team Nepal we managed to gain an experience and achievement that we will never forget.



## Nepal Itinerary

1. Build Up Day
2. Travel to Nepal
3. Kathmandu
4. Journey to Pokhara
5. Pokhara - Trek Preparation
6. Trek 1 - Landrung
7. Trek 2 - Ghandrung
8. Trek 3 - Tadapani
9. Trek 4 - Ghorepani
11. Trek 5 - Tirkendunga
12. Trek 5 - Poon Hill
13. Project - Nagajuna School
14. Nagajuna
15. Nagajuna
16. Nagajuna
17. Nagajuna
19. Chitwan National Park
20. Elephant Safari/Canoeing
21. White Water Rafting
22. Kathmandu R and R
23. Kathmandu R and R
24. Homeward Bound

## TEAM NEPAL: IN THEIR WORDS



"Nepal was amazing and definitely a once in a lifetime chance. I would encourage anyone thinking about doing world challenge to do so. And oh aye - does it rain in monsoon season?"

- Shaun Jardine-Malone, Challenger



"When I'm 90 and sitting in my arm chair I will undoubtedly look back on this experience as one of the top 3 things in my life. Every day was a long, happy day".

- Ewan Jamieson, School Leader



"I didn't know what to expect at first when I signed up for world challenge, but I am glad that I did as going to Nepal has been THEE best experience of my life".

- Chris Young, Challenger

# Team Nepal in Pictures



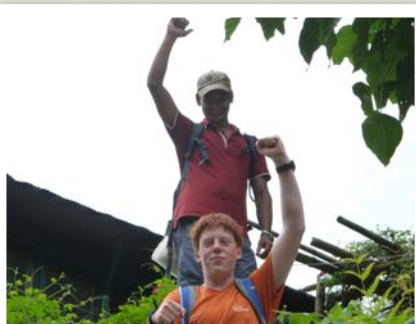
*Nagajuna Crowns*



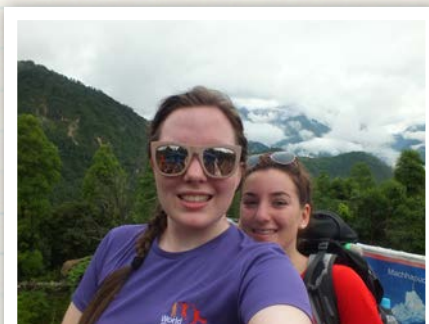
*Looking Mean on Trek*



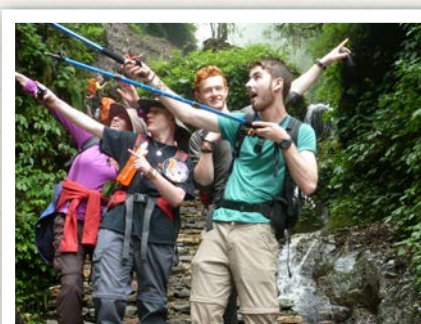
*Working Hard*



*Shaun and Ganesh*



*A "Selfy"*



*It Went That Way*



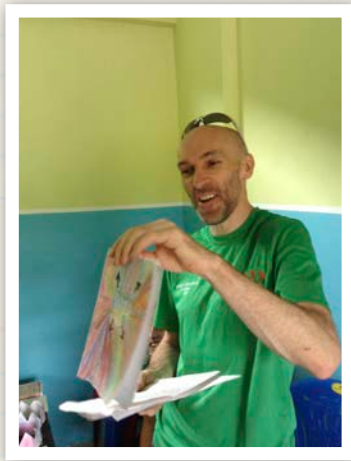
*More Steps*



*Meet Amrit*



*8 foot man*



*And the winner is ..*



*More Chillaxin'*



*Team Bonding*